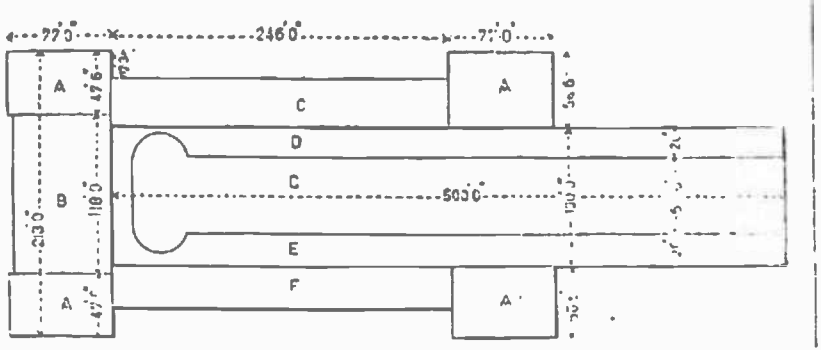
BLOCK PLAN OF STRASBOURG RAILWAY STATION.



THE STRASBOURG RAILWAY STATION, PARIS.

THE accompanying engraving represents the south elevation of the station lately erected in Paris for the railway to Strasbourg. It stands between the Rues du Faubourg St. Denis and du Faubourg St. Martin, being bounded on the south by la Rue Neuve Chabrol.

The Strasbourg line is one of those executed under the law of 1842. The State purchased the land, executed all the earthwork, bridges, culverts, &c., to formation level, and is to build all the stations, shops, and offices. The company furnish the ballast, lay down the rails, and put all the rolling stock upon the line; which, at the expiration of the lease, becomes the property of the State, the rolling stock being paid for at a valuation.

This elevation is a noticeable production, from the originality of its conception, the picturesqueness of its effect, and its consistency with the use of the building for which it was designed. On the first inspection we feel that it is not on the model of a Roman or Greek temple, of an Italian palace, or a conventual building. It tells its own tale at once. The architect has thought for himself, and has endeavoured to design a building in accordance with the wants and the taste of his own times. The monument he has produced is not without errors of detail, and its internal arrangements are very faulty; but on the whole there are marks of originality which are quite refreshing (if such a vulgarism be allowable) in the present day, when architects appear to consider the greatest merit to consist in copying what has been done before.

With reference to the block plan of the station-building annexed, it may be necessary to observe that the custom in France is not to allow strangers to enter either the waiting-rooms or the sheds. Travellers remain in the rooms until the moment of departure, and therefore do nothing more than traverse the quays on the way to the carriages. This system is preferable to our own, in which the number of people walking about renders the service more difficult and slovenly. We are, however, so fond of shaking hands at the last moment that an attempt to change the system would be attended with great obloquy.

The large shed is covered with a wrought-iron roof, in one span.

The basement of the whole of these buildings is executed in the "roche" of the "calcaire grossier;" the upper part in Pierre Franche, of St. Leu, l'Ile Adam, or of Conflans. The roofing is covered with zinc.

G. R. B.

References to the Plan.

AA. Offices.
B. Covered gallery, with groined arches of pottery, from stone columns.
C. Waiting-room.
D. Departure quay.
E. Arrival quay.
F. Baggage, arrival, &c.
G. Shed for five lines of rails.

The whole length of the shed is 500 feet; the width, 100 feet.

PRISON REFORM.

DIXON'S LIFE OF HOWARD.*

THE cosmopolitan and revered name of Howard re-appears under the hand of the present author with fresh interest, and within limits so available to the impatient temper of the present generation, that many are now likely to realize some little knowledge of a man whose name has hitherto, it must be admitted, been much better known than his history.

Mr. Dixon appears to have been for some years engaged in researches which naturally led him to give close heed to Howard's labours, and the result of which researches, is about to appear in a new work under the title of "The London Prisons," with a description of the chief prisons in the provinces. It was while so engaged that he became convinced of the public need of such an account of John Howard's life as he has now given us,—and especially at the present time, when the interest felt in prison reforms is on the increase, and the prison world a popular topic.

Much as there is yet to do in this wide field of reform, the inmates of prisons in general now stand in a most enviable position by comparison with those of the time of Howard, as every one knows in general terms, but few, probably, in special detail. How strongly does even the following exceedingly moderate and favourable specimen of gaol-accommodation, in the Marshalsea, beginning of last century, remind us of another vast field of reform, as yet scarce broached by any modern Howard, even though loudly called for in behalf of those whose honest spirit of struggling poverty prevents them from enjoying the benefits now so frequently conferred on prisoners!

"The common side," says a Parliamentary report, "is enclosed with a strong brick wall; in it are now confined upwards of 330 prisoners, most of them in the utmost necessity; they are divided into particular rooms called wards, and the prisoners belonging to each ward are locked up in their respective wards every night, most of which are excessively crowded, thirty, forty, nay fifty persons having been locked up in some of them, not 16 feet square. * * * All the last year there were sometimes forty, and never less than thirty-two persons locked up in George's ward every night, which is a room of 16 by 14 feet, and about 8 feet high; the surface of the room is not sufficient to contain that number when laid down, so that one-half are hung up in hammocks, while the other lie on the floor under them: the air is so wasted by the number of persons who breathe in that narrow compass, that it is not sufficient to keep them from stifling, several having in the heat of summer perished for want of air."

Even the more offensive details, which are here omitted, cannot be worse than those that still prevail outside the walls of gaols, though not now within.† The Marshalsea, however, was only inhabited by debtors and pirates; and the accommodation may be said to have been excellent compared with what Howard himself had at Brest, as a prisoner during war with France.

"When they were at length landed," says Mr. Dixon, "he was confined, with many other prisoners, in the castle of the town, in a dungeon, dark, damp, and filthy beyond description, where they were kept for several additional hours without nourishment. At last a leg of mutton was brought and thrown into the cell—as horseflesh is thrown into the dens of wild beasts—for the starving captives to scramble for, tear with their teeth, and devour as best they could. In this horrible dungeon, thus fed, they were detained for a week."

The world is eternally indebted to the Brest dungeon, as the turning point in the character and destiny of Howard, who, guided as it were by Providence, "with no distinct and definite object before him," had thus gone abroad and lived—an unwilling denizen—in the 'wild beasts' den' devoted to a future reform of abuses so universal.

Into the history of Howard's career we cannot here enter, and indeed our only business with this very interesting book, is to present our readers with a brief recital of some of the horrid details of dungeon-architecture and prison mismanagement witnessed by the great philanthropist,—by way of exemplar, and exclusive even, as much as possible, of any enlargement on the diabolical and scarcely credible *treatment* suffered by the miserable objects who were thrown into such inhuman dens. To this end, one or two further extracts may suffice.

"The gaol at Plymouth had a room for felons called the Chink, 17 feet long, 8 wide, and only 5½ high—so that a person of ordinary stature could not stand erect in it. This diabolical dungeon was also dark and stifling—having neither air nor light, except such as could struggle through a wicket in the door, 5 inches by 7 in dimensions. Yet Howard learned, with horror, that *three* men had been kept in this den, under a sentence of transportation, for nearly two months! They could neither see, nor breathe freely, nor could they stand upright. To keep alive at all, they were forced to crouch—each in his turn—at the wicket, to catch a few inspirations of air; otherwise they must have died of suffocation—for the door was rarely opened. When Howard saw it, the door had not been opened for five weeks—and yet it was inhabited. He caused the bolts to be shot and an entry made; but the indescribable stench which issued, would have driven back any less courageous visiter."

"As a specimen of the condition in which he found some of the bridewells, we transcribe his account of one in Folkingham, in Lincolnshire—'In this prison, under the keeper's house, are five damp rooms; two of which were used for a lunatic, who was confined here for some years. The men's lodging-room (18 feet by 9½, and 6 feet 9 inches high), has only an aperture in the door, a foot square, into the work-room. The women's room is 13 feet by 8, and 6 feet 2 inches high. In another room, 20½ feet by 12, you go down by a trap-door in the floor seven steps into a horrid dungeon (10 feet square, 5½ feet high: no chimney; small court; no pump; no sewer. Yet a woman, with a child at her breast, was sent hither for a year and a day! The child died.'"

A place of confinement for debtors at Knaresborough is thus described by the humane inspector:—

"'No fire-place; earth-floor; very offensive, a common sewer from the town running through it uncovered!' Only a short time before Howard's visit, an unfortunate officer had been cast into this horrible kennel. Having some knowledge of the place, he had the precaution to take his dog in with him, to defend him from the vermin, which the stench, arising from the open sewer, produced in myriads. In a few days the dog was destroyed, having been actually devoured by its insidious enemies; and, at the same time, its master's hands and face were so bitten as to present to the eye nothing but three great and loathsome sores!"

We cannot conclude without adverting to the circumstance that Mr. Dixon indignantly denies the charge alleged against Howard, that in his philanthropic efforts on behalf of criminals and other prisoners in gaols throughout the civilized world, he neglected his duty as a father to his only son. The author adduces what he conceives to be more than sufficient evidence to the contrary.

The utmost that can be said is, that if Howard's attention had been less absorbed by the work for which the world is his debtor, the conduct and fate of this son might have been different.

* "John Howard and the Prison World of Europe: from Original and Authentic Documents." By Hepworth Dixon. London: Jackson and Walford, St. Paul's Churchyard. 1849.

† To Howard, and to his scarcely less noble-minded wife, Henrietta, their fellow-countrymen were indebted for an exemplary endeavour to lay the foundations of an improved order of 'labourers' cottages, to which not only Howard's money, but his wife's jewels and savings for recreation and travel, were devoted.

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